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ABSTRACT

The role of arts education has been receiving increasing emphasis in early childhood education. This paper maintains that teaching itself may be considered an artistic, creative activity in the following ways: (1) teaching presents an artistic performance to the student; (2) the teacher has to make judgments during the course of instruction; (3) teaching can become an art if the teacher is not dominated by prescriptions or routines; and (4) results emerge during the instructional interaction. The paper raises questions regarding whether art can be taught and the function of art in education. The unique and valuable contribution of art to knowledge is proposed through an examination of the functions of the brain and the discursive and nondiscursive modes of knowledge. The purposes of art education are presented, focusing on its role in early childhood education. The paper then considers three aims of early childhood art education: (1) personal fulfillment and creative development; (2) social consciousness and the awareness of art in society; and (3) transmission of one's and others' cultural heritage. Ten additional specific aims and objectives of the visual arts are cited, including ways in which a well-organized, balanced arts program will contribute to the physical development, expressive-psychological development, and the technical-artistic skills development of the young child. (Contains 30 references.) (KB)

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The Art of Teaching Art in Early Childhood Education*

Abstract

After an introductory note concerning an artist's view of educational problems, reference is made to four general characteristics or ways that make teaching an art, citing theories of Arnheim, Eisner, Dewey,Getzels,et.al.These include1) that teaching should be an artistic and creative experience, 2)the teacher and the child should make judgments during the course of action 3) the teacher does not depend on "recipes" but is innovative, 4) results are not preplanned but emerge during the interaction or synenergy of teacher and children. Also, questions are raised as to whether or not "art" can be "taugh", and what is the function of art in education as noted by the Greek artist, Mytaras, and by Lowenfeld and by Howard Gardner. The unique and valuable character of art and its contribution to knowledge is then proposed through an examination of the dual-hemisherical functions of the brain or the discursive and non-discursive modes of knowlege as seen by S. Langer and by B. Edwards. Purposes and aims of art education are presented in order to develop a well-balanced, creative arts program for preschool children. Three responsibilities of art in general education that are noted by Laura Chapman, are applied to early childhood education. These are: 1) personal fulfillment and creative development, 2) social consciousness and the awareness of art in society and 3) transmission of one's and other's cultural heritage. Ten more specific aims and objectives of the visual arts are cited, concluding ways in which a well-organized, well-balanced arts program will contribute to the physical development, expressive-psychological development, and the technical-artistic skills development of the young child.

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The Art of Teaching Art in Early Childhood Education

In England, in 1950, Marion Milner noted in her book *On Not Being Able to Paint,* that from her earliest childhood age, she had the desire to draw and paint. But as she had developed some artistic skills for depicting various objects, her attempts evaporated in a labyrinth of doubts about what exactly an artist accomplishes in reality. It was then that the thought began to form that if one learns how to occupy oneself with painting and art in general, it would also be possible to discover ideas which are necessary for a general approach to the problems of education (Milner,1950 ed.,Intro.).

For artists as well as for educators, it is necessary to view the problems of art education with a theoretical and a practical basis and, according to Milner, the hope for better educational practice in our schools will come from the artists who ,without a doubt, try to make teaching an art.

1. Teaching as an art

At universities, in Schools of Education, teaching and the study of methods of teaching is considered a science, yet most of those who teach usually regard their work as an artistic, creative activity. And for those who teach art, the activity should be in harmony with the subject: it should be an artistic endeavor.

Let us cite at least four ways in which teaching can be considered an art, an artistic experience (Eisner,1972,175):

First, the way one teaches should give to the child, as well as the teacher, an aesthetic and artistic experience (Dewey,1934). There are classrooms in which teaching does become a form of artistic expression. Included in this artistic expression are the type of activities that are planned,, what questions and discussions are made, verbal as well as social interaction and synenergy, and how the whole atmosphere of the preschool classroom develops. What occurs is a "performance", in the best sense of the word.

Second, teaching is an art because teachers, like painters, have to make judgments during the course of action. They have to be creative while in the act of creating. Qualitative forms of intelligence are used, such as tone, tempo, balance and harmony, these are also artistic forms or elements of art. There is an artistic process to problem finding as well as to problem solving that takes place during the art activities (Getzels and Czikszentmihali,1971).

Third, if the teacher is not dominated by prescriptions or routines, teaching can become an art. The teacher should be influenced by the quality of things that are unpredicted. The teacher must work in an innovated manner. This does not mean that the teacher should not have "routines " or a program. On the contrary, there should be lesson plans or project-programs to refer to. Without such programs or routines, an enormous amount of energy would be used by the teacher to develop skills for the preschool classroom. Having well-developed class or activity plans gives the teacher time to deal inventively and spontaneously with the children. There should be a tension and a balance between the automatic responses and the inventive responses of the teacher (Arnheim,1989), this is what makes teaching, like art, a complex obligation and responsbility.

Fourth, teaching is an art because the ends it achieves are often created in the process and are not necessarily stated or planned at the beginning. In this sense, teaching, like art, is more "organic","holistic", and naturally "developmental" (Miller,1993). "Art" has been defined as the process

in which skills are used to discover ends through action (Dewey,1934) thus, emphasis on the new method of "active-learning" may be seen as an artistic method of teaching. H.W.Janson (1977) states that "Artists are people who play hide-and-seek but do not know what they seek until they find it!" In the same sense, teaching is a form of human action in which many of the results emerge during the actual teaching experience. They are found in the course of interaction between teacher and children, between children with children,etc. The results should not be preconcieved or preplanned, but should develop as a result of this interaction and synenergy, taking on a creative, aristic form.

Chart 1. **How teaching becomes an art**

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1) Teaching should be an artistic and creative experience.
2) The teacher and the child make judgments during the course of action.
3) The teacher does not depend on "recipes" but is innovative.
4) Results are not preplanned but emerge during the interaction of teacher and children.

The fact that teaching can be an art form, can be an artistic experience,, does not necessarily guarantee that all teaching is so. Teaching can be done badly, just as painting can be done badly. Teaching can be hard, mechanical, mindless and entirely unimaginable. But when teaching is sensitive, intelligent and creative it can then attain the status of art. And we should not spend time complaining about the lack of artistry in today's teaching, instead, we should try to encourage whatever artistry the teacher can provide,when he or she can provide it, and how it can be provided (Jackson,1969).

Artistry in teaching is important because it not only provides the children with artistic experieinces, but also there is a climate for exploration, risk-taking, discovery and play (Nikoltsos,1987,40-46). To be able to play with

ideas is to feel free to throw them into new combinations, to experiment, and even to "fail". It is through play that children discover their limits of their ideas, test their own skills, and formulate rules, symbols of communication,etc. (Bruner,1985,641-643).

The need for play is the source for invention and discovery. But for such a climate to be in the classroom, teachers themselves need to feel free to innovate, explore and to play as well.Teaching should not be a series of subjects or activities in an efficient assembly line like a factory. Teaching may have planned programs, but it also needs " flexible purposing" (Dewey, 1934) The teacher needs to know, much like the artist, when to change the goals, when to explore new interactions, and when to change techniques.

2. The function of art in education.

Why teach art? What are the goals or aims of teaching art, especially in early childhood education? The answers to such questions should take as their starting point not art, but children. We have to consider what children need from art education (Bredekamp and Copple,1997,641). What do children need to develop their creative abilities? And what do children need to have an appreciation of the fine arts? What do children need to express their spirit?

"Art cannot be taught" says the Greek artist, Dimitris Mytaras," but it can carry the message of freedom"(1989,76). Lowenfeld (1975) stated that if children developed without any interference from the outside world no special stimulation for their creative work would be necessary. Every child would use his or her own creative impulse and children would be confident in their own kind of expression (Gardner,1991). We find such creative confidence in areas like remote islands or tribal lands, where there are no influences from television, movie, comics and "education"(Singer,1993,73-88, Williams,1996). Among these people we find the most beautiful, natural and clearest examples of children's art. "What civilization has buried, we must try to regain by recreating the natural base necessary for free creation" (Lowenfeld,1975,1).

Unlike other subject areas that are based upon a stable structure of a particular discipline, art education is usually ambivalent and vague. This is because of the unstructured quality of art and the difficulty in making a set, permanent or "stable" art program. But what art has to contribute to the education of the human being is precisely what other fields cannot contribute (Arnheim,1989, Eisner,1972,5). Dewey emphasizes that art is the living and concrete proof that man can restore the sense, need, and impulse which is characteristic of living creatures. He considers that art is a conscious idea - the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity. For Dewey, art is a form of experience that vivifies life. It helps the growing organism - man - recognize that it is alive (Dewey, 1934). Such experience is what we mean by art: it is intrinsically valuable, its relatively rare, and it should not be exploited to serve other ends.

The unique and valuable character of art is even more strongly supported by Suzanne Langer (1957,13-26). She holds that there are two major "modes of knowing" through which we come to understand the world:

1.) discursive and 2.) non-discursive.

The discursive mode is characterized by the scientific method, by logic and by fields of verbal and written language. Knowledge in this mode is systematic, rational and propositional. It is said to come through use of the left side of the brain (Edwards, 1989, 38).

The non-discursive mode is characterized by feeling and emotion, this is where art is made. Knowledge in this area is through symbols of the visible, the audible and the perceivable. The forms of knowledge are spacial, poetic and non-temporal.The themes expressed are sensual and emotional. This knowledge is said to come from the right side of the brain (Edwards,1989,40).

Chart 2. **Discursve and non-discursive modes of knowledge** (Edwards,1989,40)

Left-side of the brain: discursive mode	Right-side of brain: non-discursive mode
1. Verbal - using words to name and to describe things	1. Visual - using icon-pictures instead of words
2. Analytical - figuring out things step-by step	2. Synthetic - putting things together to form a whole
3. Symbolic - using a symbol, an archetype to mean something	3. Concrete - relationship of things at the present moment
4. Abstract - using a bit of information to represent the whole	4. Analogic - seeing likenesses understanding the metaphorical
5. temporal - keeping track of time; in order: first,second, third,etc.	5.Nontemporal - limitless, without the sense of time
6. Rational - making conclusions based on reason and logic	6. Nonrational - willing to hold judgment on things
7. Digital - using numbers, units as in counting	7. Spatial - seeing where things are in relation to form a whole
8. Linear - one thought follows another leading to convergent thought	8. Holistic - perceiving overall patterns, divergent thinking

It now becomes clear how important the role of art is as a major mode for knowledge. In order for our knowledge to be whole, to be holistic in concept forming, and not one-sided, we need to have art in education. The contribution that art makes is an important one, a unique one. It puts us in contact with the right-side of the brain for creative, divergent thinking (Dorn,1999,184). For this reason again we underline the fact that art should be highly valued in education and not a second category subject, nor should it be deluted by using it to serve other purposes.

3. Purposes and aims of art education

In a democratic society, the power to determine the quality of life is shared by all people. There is not just one person or an elite few who determine how life is (Pérez de Cuéllar,1996). Laura Chapman (1978,19)states that the need for enlightened citizens in a democratic society leads to three primary responsibilities of art in general education:

1. Personal fulfillment and creative development
2. Social consciousness and the awareness of art in society
3. Transmission of one's and other's cultural heritage

Art programs in preschool education encourage personal fulfillment by helping children respond to their immediate world and to express that response visually. By seeing the role of art in society, children begin to appreciate art as a way of encountering life and not just as a pastime activity or "frill". And through contact with artistic and cultural heritage, children come to understand how art is related to cultural endeavors of the past and the present. Let us review Chapman's primary responsibilities for art in education:

1. Personal fulfillment and creative development:

Art is a dynamic and unifying activity. The process of drawing, painting and constructing is a complex one. The child brings together many different elements of his or her experience. Lowenfeld states that when the child draws, he or she gives us more than just a picture. The child gives us part of him or her self, his or her thoughts, his or her feelings, his or her spirit (Lowenfeld,1975,3). Thus when children use art as a means of self-expression and as a way of responding to life, art becomes a source of personal fulfillment. Children also have to be able to perceive expressive forms and not just create them. Looking and making art are dynamically interrelated. Children's perceptual awareness as well as their artistic, expressive skills have to be cultivated, in this way young children can begin to clarify their feelings and make sense of the confusion of raw experience. Thus, one purpose of art in

preschool education should be to develop children's independence in creating art and in perceiving the world.

2. Social conscious and awareness of art in society:

Children use visual forms to help them express their own identities, but they should also become aware of the expression of others and their place in group activities (Chapman,1978,20). Art activities can provide an opportunity for the child's awareness of the environment and encourage appreciation for the fundemental beauty of nature (Lowenfeld and Brittian,1975,19). Visual forms also reflect people's physical needs of everyday life. The color, shape, and arrangement of objects in stores and advertisements have profound effect on behavior. Children should become aware, through art, of the many visual forms that shape and express their environment.

3. Transmission of one's and other's cultural heritage:

Artistic heritage is usually defined in its braodest sense as organized knowledge about art as well as specific works done by artists. Young preschool children cannot yet learn through formal art history lessons as their older peers in the fifth or sixth grades of elementary school. But when preschool children's artistic efforts are related to their own artistic and cultural heritage, then the entire experience is personalized and readily understood. Children are helped to value the work of great artistry by making their own art (Bruner,1996).

For this reason, it is important to have art activities before, during and after visits to museums and art exhibits. Children feel the sense of the artistic creativity in the art works that they have seen when they themselves create art. Also important is the need for young preschool children to visit artists' workshops. It is very important that they witness the artist or craftsman in the process of creating and not just view an end product in an exhibit (Gardner, Winner, Kirchner, 1975, 60).

4. General aims of the visual arts in early childhood education:

There are several general aims of art activities for the preschool child which will help the kindergarten teacher formulate a well-rounded visual arts program. The aims can be divided under categories such as physical development, expressive-psychological development, technical and artistic skills development. Some aims, however, may fall within all categories and therefore should not be strictly divided. In reality, the preschool child is developing as a whole human being, some skills faster than others, some in combination with others. Art activities should be "holistic" in their planning, including well-focused aims and objectives.

Chart 3: **Aims and objectives of the visual arts in early childhood education**

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1. To encourage the observation, discussion and reflection of the child's adaptation to the natural, technical and human environment.

2. To provide an outlet for the creative and artistic inclinations of the child and to allow opportunities for the child's need of self-expression.

3. To strengthen the child's imagination and sensitivity with visual activities.

4. To allow the child to investigate, to be curious about visual phenomena, materials,etc.

5. To encourage the self-confidence and independence of the child.

6. To acquire the manual skills and dexterity through the use of artistic tools and materials.

7 . To allow the child to gain important experiences with the special textures and feelings of various materials.

8. To encourage the child to develop concrete characteristics and construction of visual forms and figures.

9. To exercise, without pressure, the perseverance and patience of the child to the care of the classroom and the method and organization of work.

10.To provide opportunities for the children to work in groups and organize their artistic creation together with group planning and direction.

In conclusion:

A well-planned visual arts program in early childhood education gives the opportunity for preschool children to witness the world around them, with open eyes and great attention. They are given the means to encounter their environment without fear and they are given a visual language through which they can organize and express their experiences and feelings (Kepes,1965). A well organized arts program helps the preschool children to understand concepts not only about art, but about the natural world in general (Rubin,1997). It also helps the children to be creative, think divergently, and slip out of conventional rules and formulas. The preschool child through visual arts activities can begin to exam alternate solutions to problems, become capable of facing trial and error, and caring on with promise and hope (Halliday,1998).

A well-organized arts program in early childhood education helps children to successfully learn the use and function of various tools and technical skills in order to make their personal statement visually. Self-confidence is gained as well as self sufficiency. It gives children the basis to express themselves more clearly through art. Also, art can be the basis for each child to expand his or her capabilities and skills, as well as their artistic experiences as they give form and shape to the materials they use.Children will develop their subjects and symbols beyond the typical "house", "flower","tree", and they will learn new techniques beyond crayon or marker drawing.

Balanced with the individual arts activities, should also be group activities. Having group art activities allows the young child to share ideas with his or her peers, to share also the materials and tools, and to learn to respect the artistic work of others. Working in group art activities the children participate in a social environment which readies them for the real world outside the four walls of the kindergarten classroom (Frangos, 49).

It is through a good arts program in the kindergarten or child centers, that children can express and give form to their emotions, their ideas and their feelings, which otherwise would be difficult, if not impossible, to express with the written or spoken language (Nikoltsos,1995,140).Suzanne Langer (1953) has stated the belief that there is an important part of reality which doesn't have, cannot have, expression in language, in the spoken or written word: it is the world of the so-called external or inward expression - the life of the spirit, the emotion, the feelings. The basic function of art is to make into "objects" - visual, tangible objects - these very emotions, feelings, this spirit, in order that we might perceive it and understand it (Langer,1953,4-5). It is precisely as the Greek novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis has written (1985,65):

"Την πνοή τούτη μαχόμαστε	"We struggle to make
να κάμουμε ορατή,	the spirit visible,
να της δώσουμε πρόσωπα...	to give it a face...
να μη μας φύγει."	that it may not escape us."

This is the function of art, and the function of art in education:to make the spirit visible. Teaching art at all levels of education, but especially at the preschool level, should thus provide unlimited opporunities for the young children, who cannot easily express their spirit in lanuage, to do so through art. Art activities should be planned with balance, harmony, tone, and in a creative spirit. Such creative teaching makes teaching of art an art.

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